

The Briefing



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William Wilberforce and productivity

Gordon Cheng (<http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/authors/gordon-cheng/>) | 17 November, 2010

[A Theology of Workflow](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/novemberweb-only/54-41.o.html?start=1) (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/novemberweb-only/54-41.o.html?start=1>) is a top little article on Christians and productivity. It's in *Christianity Today*, a magazine which has good stuff and not so good stuff, so read with care. The article itself is an excellent brief interview with Matt Perman, producer of the extremely useful [What's Best Next](http://www.whatsbestnext.com) (<http://www.whatsbestnext.com>) blog.

I'm not a big fan of his email box to zero inclinations, now that we have search engines built into email browsers. But apart from that, Matt Perman has helped me get from being a below-medocre organizer to a just-on-medocre organizer—or at least maintained that mediocrity, rather than falling further into the primordial slime that represents the direction in which entropy invariably takes us ... sinking, sinking down, sinking down. Not wanting to damn him with faint praise though, he actually knows what he's talking about. Administration may not be a strong point, but I can spot good organization from my usual vantage point of a mile off.

That's not the really interesting thing, though. From late in the article, Perman offers a wonderful observation:

Two incredible individuals in Christian history who exemplify [Christian productivity!] are William Carey and William Wilberforce. Wilberforce led a life full of good works. Here's the interesting thing: Wilberforce wrote one book in his lifetime, and it was not on social reform. It was on the doctrine of justification by faith apart from works. He did it because he realized that the way to produce a life of good works and social reform is not to focus first on good works and social reform, but on the source of those good works—which is the gospel.

The world will remember you for all sorts of reasons other than the gospel, and will bury the gospel bits if it has a chance. Judging by his literary output, Wilberforce wanted to point careful observers back to the engine room of his good works: God's kindness in Christ Jesus, through the power of Jesus' death and resurrection.

(Also check Matt's blog post, *[Productivity is Really About Good Works](http://www.whatsbestnext.com/2010/11/productivity-is-really-about-good-works/)*
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